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Crescendo! The Newsletter of the Buffalo Gay Men's  
Chorus

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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Spring 2010

# Crescendo!, Spring 2010

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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# CRESCENDO

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
 BUFFALO GAY MEN'S CHORUS, INC.

## First-Ever BGMC Performance at African American Church

by Andrew C. Pollard

For the first time in its history, the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus performed in an African-American church as part of its ongoing commitment to support LGBT people of color. On February 20, 2010 the BGMC presented its "Love Unbound" concert at Unity Fellowship Church on Main St. in Buffalo. The concert raised over \$1,300 for the church headed by Rev. Gerard Williams, who has worked to bring a congregation of the Unity Fellowship to the Buffalo area. Unity Fellowship is the only denomination in the African-American church tradition that welcomes LGBT people to full inclusion.

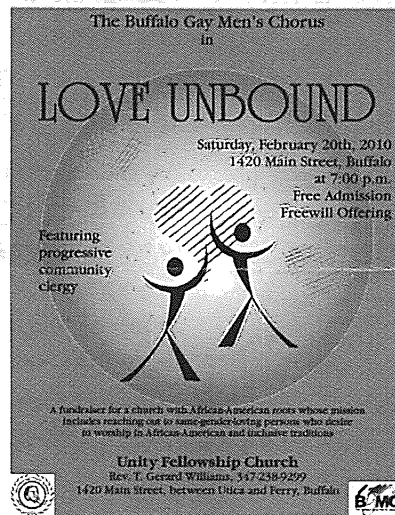
Joining the BGMC and Pastor Williams for the fundraiser were LGBT-supportive local clergy Geri Lyon of First Presbyterian Church, Joel Miller of the Unitarian Universalist Church, and Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein of Temple Sinai. Carol Speser, a leader in the local LGBT community, also spoke at the event, as did New York State Senator

Antoine M. Thompson, who was presented with Unity Fellowship's Bayard Rustin Award in recognition of his work in support of passing marriage

welcome an appearance by the chorus. Also historic was the publication of a full length press release about the concert in the Buffalo Challenger, a prominent African American newspaper in the Buffalo area. The BGMC was in fine voice and full numbers for the performance before an enthusiastic and appreciative audience.

Special thanks go to the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus Outreach Committee for helping the BGMC achieve this important milestone in its mission to enlighten as well as entertain. This committee includes Barbara Wagner, Dr. Larry Van Heusen, Rev. Brian Rotach, Rev. John Rex, Raymond Neil, and former BGMC presidents Dennis Stuart and Mike Liska.

Congratulations!



equality legislation in New York.

The "Love Unbound" concert capped a three-year long effort by the BGMC's Outreach Committee to find an African-American church that would

### Crescendo Editors

Keith Galantowicz  
 Andrew C. Pollard  
 Matthew Mooney



BGMC REHEARSAL WITH BARB

**BGMC**  
 The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus



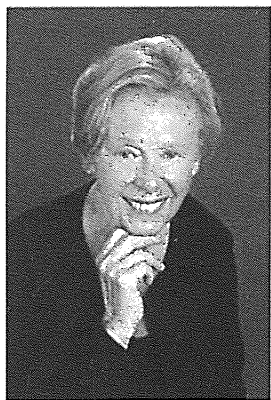
BGMC SPAGHETTI DINNER & CABARET



# Barbara Wagner, BGMC Artistic Director



## BARB'S CORNER



As I reflect on the year that has passed by so quickly since last fall, I sometimes wonder how we survived! As we looked at the financial statement that was to dictate what we could do this past year, I must say it was a bit terrifying. How could we continue? Yet financial gifts came in

from supporters, leaders and singers within our beloved chorus. We had a brand new Board. The strong and determined prevailed and we went out and sang.

We started at the Chautauqua Institution singing for a group of gay and lesbian people who all lived in the Chautauqua area, in places where no other gays lived. It was an amazing event. As we sang and laughed and cried with the audience we realized that both they and we were exactly where we needed to be that early fall evening.

We sang at the Buffalo Seminary (I invited us there--I can be a bit pushy!) where the strong, young women wept with us through the songs that mean so much to us all. To these high school students we were "sooooo cute!"

We sang on a program with the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus. My dear, new friend and colleague, Doreen Rao loved us, as did the people from the BPO Chorus. It was a lovely evening, but like the Buffalo Seminary performance, our ranks were smaller than in the past.

I think the turning point was our performance at the Albright Knox Gallery for the "Lighting of the Christmas Tree" ceremony. The performance was almost like a miracle. With our numbers and spirits high, our singing was gorgeous. We had survived a difficult summer and fall and come in from something of a wilderness. That was exactly how I felt when that evening ended. I kept feeling and saying, "We're back, we're back." And we were.

We went on to a triumphant Christmas season of concerts that included our first ever appearance at the Riviera Theatre in North Tonawanda. Organized by Amilcar Hill, this was a program all about love. Amilcar and his wife had lost their

beautiful son in the late summer and this incredibly moving concert was a tribute to him and to the power of love.

We performed one more concert in February that was not only about love, it was an act of love. The BGMC was joined by prominent religious and community leaders to welcome and support the Unity Fellowship Church, a brand new, LGBT-affirming community of worship in the African-American church tradition. After our wonderful performance that night, I recalled the time several years ago when we were threatened by protesters for singing in a church. Now, the beautiful songs that told of our dreams for ourselves and our community were warmly applauded in this new, welcoming church that we had come to support. A season that had begun for us with so much challenge now saw us renewed and recommitted to our mission to serve our community with pride.

Quite a story! This leads me to my thoughts about our upcoming concert series this June 18-20th.

I've always wanted us to tell our story in song--hence the title of this concert--"Once Upon a Time." Now, I've talked enough to my dear men to know that sometimes the gay life begins very early. So we begin the June concert with a very silly song about the birth of a "Drama Queen." You can imagine where we go from there, but I promise you'll hear some of the loveliest music we've ever sung, including: "Save the Last Dance For Me," "Walk Hand in Hand," "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother," the charming "Rainbow Connection," "A Love That Will Never Grow Old," and one of the most touching of all, "Both Ways," the story of a puzzled young gay teenager who wonders why he's treated one way in front of all his pals and another way when he's alone with his special friend. I can hardly wait for you to hear all of this powerful music as we tell you our story.

If I've been reminded of anything after what began as a difficult year with many challenges, it is that we have each other, we're brothers, and we're there for each other no matter how hard it might be. Please come join our family in June. We want to share our stories with you, our beloved and loyal friends and patrons.

Thank you, dear friends, for all you have done and will do to help us continue our mission to our community.

With much love and gratitude,

Barb



## Members of BGMC Appear at Niagara-Wheatfield GLYS Conference

by Flip Taporco

Many of us have experienced the pain and suffering of coming out. Some of us came out at a very early age and some of us later in life. Regardless of when in our lives we made this difficult journey, what we have in common is that we lacked a place to go to find help.

For myself, I never did get to talk to anyone about my sexuality. I was talked at about how bad "those people" are and about what a "bad lifestyle that is." There wasn't anywhere for me to turn or anyone I could reach out to with my questions. I had the feeling that I was all alone.

So imagine how excited I felt, years later, singing as a proud member of a gay chorus. A room of 150 high school students had come together to discuss the challenges they face as LGBT teenagers and to listen to us sing. The event was the Gay and Lesbian Youth Services Conference held at Niagara Wheatfield High School this past February. I was part of a small contingent of BGMC singers who made the trip up to Niagara County for this evening of music and outreach.



I was deeply moved by the youth I met. Not only did they enjoy our singing, but they appreciated that the members of the BGMC shared our growing up and coming out stories. The BGMC members who were there that night felt a bond with these youth. We had all experienced much of the same pain and suffering growing up. However, they had a place where they could go to find information, support and friendship. That place is the Gay and Lesbian Youth Services here in Buffalo.

As we sang and shared our stories with the youth of Niagara Wheatfield High School, I felt pride building up. The pain and suffering of coming out seemed distant. In its place was the awareness of what I had longed to know as a child myself. Affirmed on the faces of our appreciative audience I realized, "I know I am not alone."

Cut along dotted line and mail bottom portion with your donation today: BGMC, 51 Colonial Circle, Buffalo, NY 14222

Yes, I'll join the Friends of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus!

- ☐ Composer \$3,000+  
☐ Maestro \$1,000-\$2,999  
☐ Virtuoso \$500-\$999  
☐ Conductor \$200-499  
☐ Soloist \$100-\$199  
☐ Singer \$30-\$99  
☐ Other \$

☐ Memorial Donation \$

In memory of

☐ Honorarium \$

In honor of

☐ Would you like your name to appear in our next program? (Please PRINT exactly how you would like your name to appear.)

☐ Check here if you do NOT want your name to appear in our program.

Friends who contribute at the \$200 "Conductor" level and above will receive two tickets to next concert.

Name

Address

City, State, Zip +4

Home Telephone Business Phone

E-Mail Address

☐ Please add me to the BGMC mailing list.

☐ I have time or services that may help the BGMC. Please contact me.



# President's Column

by Christopher S. Babbitt, BGMC President



It's hard to believe that it is May already! The BGMC has had a very productive year so far, with more activities and appearances still to come. Among the highlights this year were our guest appearance at the annual Albright Knox tree lighting ceremony, our performance to record audiences at our Holiday Concert "Joyful and Triumphant," and our participation in a rally of support for Lindsey Harmon. Lindsey is the young woman who

suffered a hate-crime attack last January as she walked with her girlfriend on Main St. in Buffalo. As you can see from all of our activities, we have been very busy.

The BGMC started out the year with diminished hopes for a successful season as we faced financial hardship for the first time in many years. Like many other nonprofit organizations, the BGMC has been affected by the economic recession that took hold in 2008. However, I am happy to report that the Board of Directors has stayed true to its pledge to bring the BGMC out of its financial difficulties. While it has taken much hard work and determination on our part, we also know we would not be where we are today if it weren't for all of our loyal fans. The BGMC understands the importance of community and friendships. It has been these very relationships that we have developed and cultivated with you over the past

8½ years that have lifted us out of our financial hardship. We want to say THANK YOU for all the love, support, and monetary donations that you have been providing to the BGMC over the years, and continue to give as we move forward with renewed confidence.

Throughout the past year, the BGMC has realized more than ever that we are needed within our own community and beyond. Requests for our performances continue to grow within the WNY area, and from as far away as Pennsylvania. We understand our mission and the importance of our presence. Your continued support enables us to respond to requests for performances that not only entertain but enlighten.

Again, thank you for all your support. We look forward to seeing you in June!

*Christopher*

## OFFICERS 2010

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KATHLEEN BRYCE NILES

### ACCOMPANIST

KATHLEEN BRYCE NILES

## By-laws Committee Completes Work on Revisions

A committee charged by the Board of Directors to review the governing rules of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus wrapped up its work in February when the membership of the chorus voted to accept proposed revisions to the BGMC's governing by-laws. The work constituted the first major review and revision of the BGMC by-laws since the chorus was founded in 2001. The changes streamline and clarify the governing structure of the BGMC and provide an organizational architecture for the continued growth and

development of the chorus as a nonprofit, artistic organization.

The By-laws Committee was headed by BGMC board member Norm Duttweiler and included BGMC past presidents Dennis Stuart and Spike Liska, as well as members Mark Peszko and Andrew Pollard. Many thanks to the By-laws Committee and its chair for their hard work over the many months. Also, thanks go to members of the BGMC who provided valuable feedback and suggestions on the revisions, in particular Tim Mahiques and Bill Gardner.

[www.BuffaloGayMensChorus.org](http://www.BuffaloGayMensChorus.org)

## Member Spotlight:

*Nathan E. Phillips*

by Andrew C. Pollard

Award-winning Amherst Middle School teacher, coach, advisor and legend of Buffalo's Imperial Court (and former Miss Queen City), Nathan E. Phillips is a valued member of the BGMC's Tenor 11 section and one of the most dedicated people you are ever likely to meet.

"My mother always stressed giving back to the community," Nathan said during our interview for the Crescendo. The effects of growing up with such an ethos became obvious from our brief conversation.

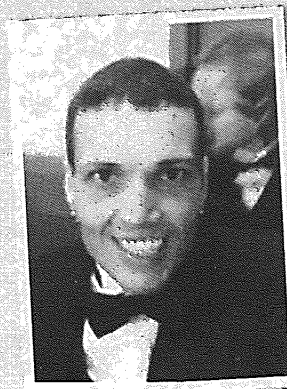
Take, for example, the genesis of Nathan's beloved drag persona, *Gladys Over*. Initially resistant to the idea of donning mascara and an evening gown, Nathan finally took the plunge into *Gladys* only after a longtime friend pressed him to perform drag to help raise money to support people with HIV-AIDS. Several colorful years and \$75,000 later, Nathan, aka "*Gladys*," continues to give back to local AIDS charities in high and hilarious style. Anyone who's ever attended *Gay Bingo* can attest to that.

Later, Nathan told me, "I don't remember a time when music wasn't a part of my life." Nathan joined the BGMC back in 2007, bringing with him years of singing and musical theater experience. During his high school days in central New York, Nathan's vocal abilities won him positions in the prestigious All-State and All-Eastern U.S. Choruses. In the BGMC, Nathan combines his musical gifts with a giving spirit that overflows from every other part of his life, whether it's teaching his middle-school students, coaching softball and volleyball, mentoring youth, or calling bingo.

"Nathan just overflows with enthusiasm," said one chorus member. "It's hard not to be inspired by getting to know Nate." Nathan's personal journey encompasses years of struggle and finally overcoming issues with his weight; a victory of courage and personal fortitude in which the BGMC played a vital role. "When I first heard the chorus, I wanted to join. I wanted to sing. I went to all the concerts, but I couldn't fit into a tuxedo. I promised myself that I would fit into a tux and then join the chorus."

Three years and 240 pounds later, Nathan Phillips stood proudly in his tux in his first performance as a member of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus. Nathan hasn't missed a concert since, and the BGMC has continued to be blessed by his presence.

[www.BuffaloGayMensChorus.org](http://www.BuffaloGayMensChorus.org)



**NATHAN E. PHILLIPS**

"I DON'T REMEMBER A TIME WHEN MUSIC WASN'T A PART OF MY LIFE."



## NEWCOMER

*Teresa K. Tam*

The BGMC has an angel in its midst and her name is Teresa Tam. For me personally, and for many others, she has helped us to uncomplicate our lives. We first met Teresa back in October of 2009. She was taking a course in Arts

Management at the University of Buffalo and one of the assignments was to do a study of a local arts organization and write a paper on the findings. Teresa chose the BGMC, and the rest is history. I would see her at our concerts and rehearsals and finally Teresa, who is a splendid musician in her own right, asked me if she could join my church choir. I said, "YES!" I found out very quickly that she had all kinds of choral experience and expertise, as well as being an accomplished cellist. What luck!! Of course, that's not the end of the story. She then began asking me if she could volunteer to help the BGMC. We've needed an Office Administrator for years and Teresa said, "I think I could do that." Can she ever! I took her to our office that very day. We made lists of things we needed, including a new computer hard drive. Off we went to Office Depot and bought what was needed. We even bought one of those big desk calendars. Teresa said, "Any respectable office needs one of those." Our office and storage spaces are now organized and orderly. We can find our "stuff" easily and we aren't even duplicating materials that we already had. Teresa continues to work her magic with competence and good cheer. She is there for all of us with a smile and often a hug. I love her dearly. We all love her. She even comes up at the end of rehearsals on Tuesday nights and joins us in "*How Can I Keep From Singing?*" Teresa's bio reads like a Who's Who? She's only 26 and has been singing and playing the cello for many of those years with some of the finest teachers in WNY. She is presently a Premier Sales Officer in the Remote Center of HSBC Bank. We are so grateful to her for all she does.

Barbara Wagner, Artistic Director

# Once Upon a Time

Friday, June 18, 2010  
Unitarian Universalist Church  
695 Elmwood Ave.  
Buffalo, NY • 8pm

Saturday, June 19, 2010  
First Presbyterian Church  
1 Symphony Circle  
Buffalo, NY • 8pm

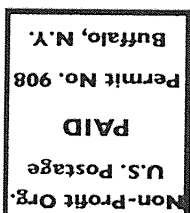
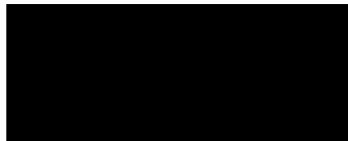
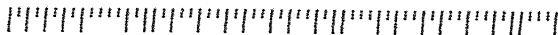
Sunday, June 20, 2010  
Orchard Park Presbyterian Church  
4369 South Buffalo Rd.  
Orchard Park, NY • 4pm

## SAVE THESE DATES

1. June 5th - The Concert for Kavinoky Theatre - **"Singing for Scholars"** - 8pm - Tickets Online Only
2. June 6th - Gay Pride/Bidwell Park Performance
3. June 18, 19 & 20th - **"Once Upon a Time"** Summer Concert Series

The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, Inc. is a member of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses, Inc. (GALA Choruses). GALA Choruses foster the artistic and organizational development of member choruses through a variety of programs and services.  
[www.galachoruses.org](http://www.galachoruses.org)

For tickets call 716.883.1277 or go to [www.BuffaloGayMensChorus.org](http://www.BuffaloGayMensChorus.org)



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